

WASHINGTON, DC-Today, Congressman Earl Blumenauer participated in a press conference at Union Station celebrating the opening of the 2002 Rail~Volution conference, the release of a new report on public transit in America and the unveiling of the new self-propelled DMU rail car. The DMU rail car is being considered by a number of communities pursuing new commuter rail service, including the Portland metropolitan region. He released the following statement highlighting the conference and the new report:

"This week, over 1,300 people will convene in Washington, D.C. for the 2002 Rail~Volution conference to talk about ways that transit and rail are making an important difference to their communities. These participants represent 4 countries, 43 states and 243 cities. Rail~Volution has grown into the definitive national conference on building livable communities with transit. It brings together a unique cross-section of citizen activists, developers, financiers, transit operators, local elected and federal officials, planners, health advocates and nonprofit organizations.

"Next year Congress will take up the reauthorization of TEA-21, AIR-21 and Amtrak. Holding this year's conference in the nation's capitol is a perfect opportunity to spotlight the policies and funding needed to build on transit's success in helping to build more livable communities. Since the first Rail~Volution conference held in Portland, Oregon eight years ago, we have witnessed a rail renaissance in this country. Currently, 49 of the 50 largest metropolitan areas have built or are considering building a new starts project.

"Today's new report, 'Against the Odds: The Renaissance of Public Transit in America,' helps to put some numbers behind the success stories that we are hearing. This report verifies what we know: that citizens in the United States are choosing transit. Ridership has grown 20 percent in last half of 1990s; these gains are especially pronounced for light, heavy and commuter rail systems. Availability of flexible dollars combined with "leveling the playing field" on match ratios between highways and transit has resulted in \$7.75 billion flexed to the transit program between 1992-2001.

"Communities are seeing a return on their investment in transit with larger percentage increases in ridership than those communities that have not made comparable investments. Policies initiated in ISTEA and continued in TEA-21 are working and communities are choosing to build or expand public transportation systems.